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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000668

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: MAY DAY EVENTS POTENTIAL SIGN OF IMPROVEMENT IN
DJIBOUTIAN LABOR RELATIONS

REF: (A) DJIBOUTI 530 (B) DJIBOUTI 460

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) May Day celebrations in Djibouti City may be a sign that the Government is changing its position on labor relations between the Government and the legitimate national labor union. Both the Union Djiboutienne de Travailleurs (UDT) and the government created Union General Travailleurs de Djiboutienne (UGTD) held rallies on 1 May to celebrate the Djiboutian Labor Day. The significant event of this year's celebrations was the funding given by the Government of Djibouti to both unions to organize their rallies. UGTD was given 1,000,000DF (approximately \$5,600) and UDT was given 500,000DF (approximately \$2,800). Both rallies also received coverage on the local television news, though UDT received less time. UGTD's rally was covered by a half-page column in La Nation, the government run newspaper, which ended by saying coverage of the UDT rally would follow in next editions.

2. (C) Pol/Econ's conversations with UDT Secretary, Souleiman Djama and UDT Secretary General, Aden Mohamed Abdou, indicated that this gesture may be an improvement for the moment, but not for the long term. Djama speculated that the Government's actions concerning Labor Day may be merely a play towards voters in preparation for the Presidential election next year or perhaps a show of positive steps in response to continued pressure from the international community to improve labor practices. He continues that it was an improvement, but the motivations behind it were not certain. Abdou was of a slightly different school of thought, saying that this gesture may have been a real step towards opening negotiations to recognize the legitimately elected UDT. He also speculated that it may be a tactic to test the members of the UDT and to try to pull some to the government's side. Nevertheless, he said, this was a positive step. The question was how long it would last.

3. (C) Post believes that both Abdou and Djama's view on the apparent improvements have merit. Reflecting on the long history of discord between the Guelleh administration and UDT, this sudden change in attitude seems to hide ulterior motives. Time can only tell whether Guelleh's potential improvement turns out to be a genuine gesture of reconciliation.

RAGSDALE